

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-09 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSR-01 SSO-00 /061 W

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R 271130 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 885

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 7378

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS MILI VS

SUBJECT: CONTINUING SECTOR OPERATION IN CENTRAL BINH DINH PROVINCE

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SAIGON INFO BIEN HOA, CAN THO, DANAG,
USDAO/ SAIGON FROM NHA TRANG DATED APRIL 26 RPTD FOR YOUR INFO:

QUOTE NHA TRANG 435

REF: NHA TRANG 0408

1. SUMMARY: ONE SIGNIFICANT SECTOR OPERATION EMPLOYING TERRITORIAL FORCES CONTINUES IN CENTRAL BINH DINH PROVINCE, EVEN THOUGH GVN COMMAND ATTENTION REMAINS FOCUSED ON NORTHERN PART OF PROVINCE WHERE ENEMY OFFENSIVE ACTION IS EXPECTED AND WHERE ALL ARVN INFANTRY AND RANGER UNITS AVAILABLE IN PROVINCE HAVE BEEN CONCENTRATED (REFTEL). THIS SECTOR OPERATION WAS MAKING LITTLE PROGRESS, HOWEVER, UNTIL THE MR 2 COMMAND AUTHORIZED AIRSTRIKES (NORMALLY RESERVED FOR HIGHER- PRIORITY AREAS OF THE MR) IN SUPPORT OF IT LATE LAST WEEK. END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE EARLY APRIL, FIVE RF COMPANIES IN PHU MY DISTRICT, BINH DINH, HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO CLEAR ENEMY FORCES FROM FOUR HAMLETS IN MY TAI VILLAGE (VICINITY BR.93.62) REPORTEDLY SEIZED AT TIME OF CEASE FIRE. COMMUNISTS ALREADY CONTROLLED FIVE VILLAGES ON COAST OF PHU MY DISTRICT (MY CHANH, MY THANH, MY THO, MY AN
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AND MY THANG). THEY EVIDENTLY HOPED TO ADD MY TAI VILLAGE TO THEIR

CHAIN, JUST AS THEY ATTEMPTED AT TIME OF CEASE- FIRE TO GAIN CONTROL OF DE GI PORT AREA IN NORTHEASTERN PHU CAT DISTRICT, JUST SOUTH OF THE SAME STRING OF COASTAL VILLAGES.

3. FRIENDLY FORCES OPERATING

IN THE MOSTLY V- RATED HAMLETS OF MY TAI VILLAGE (NHA TRANG 368 NOTAL,) APRIL 6 SIT REP) MADE LITTLE PROGRESS UNTIL APRIL 19, WHEN THE MR 2 COMMAND FINALLY AUTHORIZED AIRSTRIKES IN SUPPORT OF THE OPERATION. EIGHT AIRSTRIKES ON THAT DATE DAMAGED WELL- FORTIFIED ENEMY POSITIONS THAT HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN IMPERVIOUS TO FRIENDLY ARTILLERY, AND VNAF FAC' S CLAIM THEY SAW ENEMY CARRYING OFF 50 CASUALTIES. RF COMPANIES THEN ADVANCED AND FORCE CONSTRICTION OF ENEMY- CONTROLLED AREA TO APPROXIMATELY 2 SQUARE KMS., LESS THAN HALF OF ITS FORMER SIZE. HOWEVER, SECTOR OFFICERS ESTIMATED THAT OPERATION WOULD REQUIRE SEVERAL MORE DAYS FOR COMPLETION, BOTH BECAUSE OF ENEMY' S TENACIOUS DEFENSE (AN ESTIMATED 350 TROOPS FROM VC PROVINCIAL UNITS REMAIN IN AREA) AND RF COMMANDERS' DESIRE TO HOLD DOWN THEIR CASUALTIES.

4. SECTOR OFFICER WHO BRIEFED QUI NHON POLOFF ON FOREGOING NOTED IN PASSING THAT SECTOR HAD FOUND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN MR 2 HQ APPROVAL FOR AIRSTRIKES, EVEN FOR THIS LONG- RUNNING OPERATION STALLED BY STRONG ENEMY DEFENSES. HE SAID MR 2 WAS GIVING FIRST PRIORITY FOR AIR SUPPORT TO PLEIKU AND TO NORTHERN BINH DINH. HE DEFINED LATTER AREA AS THAT PORTION OF PROVINCE NORTH OF PHU CU PASS (ON THE BORDER OF PHU MY AND HOAI NHON DISTRICTS), UP TO AND INCLUDING THE SA HUYNH AREA OF SOUTHERN QUANG NGAI PROVINCE. (THIS PART OF BINH DINH IS 22 ND DIVISION' S AREA OF OPERATIONS, NOT SECTOR' S.) HE ADDED THAT IN RECENT WEEKS VNAF HAS SOMETIMES FLOWN AS MANY AS 60 AIRSTRIKES PER DAY IN NORTHERN BINH DINH.

5. CONFIRMING INFO REPORTED REFTTEL, SECTOR OFFICER SAID THAT PLANNED FRIENDLY OPERATIONS TO CLEAR VIET CONG FORCES " PERMANENTLY" FROM COASTAL PHU MY, HOAI NHON AND TAM QUAN DISTRICTS (WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN AREA OF FIRST PRIORITY) AND FROM THE VINH THANH VALLEY IN BINH KHE DISTRICT (SECOND PRIORITY) HAVE BEEN SHELVED UNTIL THE NVA THREAT TO THE PHU CU PASS AREA HAS BEEN DEALT WITH. HE CLAIMED THAT THE NVA UNITS ON THE PHU CU PASS HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES

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BUT ARE UNDER ORDERS TO HANG ON TO THEIR POSITIONS HARD BY THE ARVN POSITIONS AT THE TOP OF THE PASS.

6. SECTOR OFFICER ADDED THAT THE THREE RANGER BATTALIONS IN AM QUAN DISTRICT HAD EASED THE ENEMY THREAT THERE. HE WAS NOW MORE CONCERNED ABOUT HOAI NHON DISTRICT, WHICH HE THINKS WILL BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE ENEMY OFFENSIVE GVN PREDICTS IN BINH DINH. (ARRO LOCAL EMPLOYEES WORKING IN TAM QUAN ADD THAT THE RANGERS HAVE BEEN

BEHAVING EXTREMELY WELL TOWARD THE LOCAL POPULATION; THIS IS IN SHARP CONTRAST TO BEHAVIOR OF 47 TH REGT OF 22 ND DIVISION, WHICH WAS PULLED OUT OF TAM QUAN AT BEGINNING OF APRIL.)

7. COMMENT: GVN COMMANDERS IN BINH DINH APPEAR FIRM IN THEIR ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION AS THAT ASSESSMENT WAS DESCRIBED IN REFTEL. WITH REGARD TO USE OF TACTICAL AIR IN MR 2, WE WOULD NOTE THAT MR 2 REGIONAL BRIEFING IN NHA TRANG HAS SELDOM REPORTED MORE THAN 35 OR 40 AIRSTRIKES PER DAY, REGION- WIDE, ON ANY DAY SINCE EARLY MARCH. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT PRIORITIES ARE AS ENUMERATED BY THE SECTOR OFFICER IN PARA 4 ABOVE. ON APRIL 24, FOR EXAMPLE, ALL OF THE REPORTED 38 AIRSTRIKES FLOWN THAT DAY WERE IN BINH DINH (SEE NHA TRANG 0429 NOTAL, APRIL 25 SIT REP), AND WE BELIEVE IT MUST HAVE BEEN TAC AIR THAT ACCOUNTED FOR THE CLAIMED 37 ENEMY KIA NEAR THE PHU CU PASS ON THE SAME DATE. ENGLE
UNQUOTE BUNKER

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